UNRAVELING OREGON’S WICKED PROBLEMS

by

creating positive change in our communities

2016–2021 Strategic Plan

University Outreach and Engagement
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Division of University Outreach and Engagement

Oregon State University
A wicked problem is one that is difficult—or even impossible—to solve because of its complex, interconnected nature with other challenging problems. For example, poverty cannot be reduced without increasing the economic vitality of a community and improving access to education. Mitigating wicked problems requires flexibility, a long-term resource commitment, and a strategy that builds the capacity within a community to address the issue. Unraveling Oregon’s wicked problems is the definition of the outreach and engagement work of Oregon State, Oregon’s land-grant university.

Strategic plans are designed to clarify what is important for an organization and guide where the organization is heading, how it is going to get there, and how it measures progress and success. We know that it is impossible to foresee the future, which makes it imperative that planning be flexible and responsive to our changing world.

By the very nature of the land-grant mission, we must respond to the realities of our communities and adapt as new challenges and issues arise in the present and the future.

We work to improve the health and well-being of Oregonians and communities, encourage economic development and industry innovation, create and share the science and knowledge of Oregon State University, and deliver access to education for learner success and lifelong learning.

Responding to Oregon’s real-life challenges

The Division of University Outreach and Engagement responds to Oregon’s complex problems as well as Oregon’s natural landscape and industry, state priorities, and the mandate of Oregon State University.

We are committed to solving Oregon’s challenges
- Poverty
- High dropout rates for high school students
- Inequality
- Rural economic development
- Food insecurity
- Adult and child obesity

We are dedicated to promoting, supporting, preserving, and improving issues critical to the success of Oregon communities
- Sustainable management of working landscapes
- Ensuring water quality and quantity
- Promoting public health, food safety and security
- Business development and value-added manufacturing
- Educating the workforce of tomorrow

We dedicate resources to champion state priorities
- Seamless system of education—cradle to career
- Thriving statewide economy
- Healthy, safe Oregonians
- Responsible environmental stewardship

We advocate for Oregon State University’s strategic mandate
- Sustainable earth ecosystems
- Human health and wellness
- Economic growth and social progress
Vision

The life of each person we engage will be demonstrably improved and enriched by access to and co-creation of innovation, knowledge, and expertise.

Mission

Outreach and Engagement at Oregon State University enhances access to enrichment and problem-solving through reciprocal relationships for the exchange of knowledge and resources in partnership with individuals, communities, business, industries, government, and educational institutions.

collaborating to find solutions to present and future complex problems
the wisdom and resources in local communities are shared with the OSU community, and in turn, OSU derives its research agenda and shares its resources with local communities

deeper, more meaningful knowledge
all people and organizations involved benefit from the relationship

Values

Learner-centered approach
We engage collaboratively with our diverse learners and stakeholders, and adapt to meet their needs.

Innovation
We embrace creativity and new methods, ideas, and products to improve the services we provide.

Integrity
We are responsible, ethical, and accountable for our actions.

Diversity
We embrace and advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Knowledge
We use research-based, community-generated, and indigenous knowledge to guide our decisions, practices, and actions.

Healthy work environment
We respect that faculty and staff are a valuable resource, and believe we all deserve an empowering, supportive, and caring environment.

Social responsibility
We contribute to society’s well-being and intellectual, cultural, and economic progress.
Goals

1. Enhance the culture and impact of Oregon State University.
   Our goals are to integrate outreach and engagement throughout all departments in the university; create, enhance, and support partnerships within and beyond the university; provide transformative experiences for all learners and communities; and contribute in measurable ways to OSU’s signature areas of distinction: sustainable earth ecosystems, human health and wellness, and economic growth and social progress.

2. Equitably serve a broad diversity of learners, communities, and stakeholders.
   Our goals are to expand our capacity to effectively serve new and historically underrepresented learners, communities, and stakeholders; learn from and with diverse populations and communities to identify and address the challenges they face; create and deliver educational experiences to equitably serve diverse populations and communities; and provide multiple and varied ways for people to access education, research, and information.

3. Increase community and learner engagement.
   Our goals are to learn from and collaborate with people and communities to build relationships and create synergy; create, apply, and share knowledge, ideas, and resources through mutually beneficial and reciprocal exchange with communities and learners; and cultivate environments where learners can deeply connect with the content and with each other, to increase their curiosity, interest, knowledge, and bond to learning.

4. Be broadly recognized for our impacts and as a resource.
   Our goals are to be recognized for our achievements and the impact of our work; and be recognized as a leading resource for teaching and learning, as well as research-based, academic, and applied knowledge.

5. Have a supportive workplace culture.
   Our goals are to build and maintain a work environment where people can be healthy, proud, and happy to work; share commitment to the mission, vision, values, and goals of the Division; invest resources in outreach and engagement efforts that advance the Division’s mission, vision, and values; be an organization composed of people with varied identities, experiences, perspectives, and types of expertise; create and sustain an equitable and inclusive organizational culture; and encourage and support professional development, creativity, innovation, and work-life balance.

The Division of University Outreach and Engagement will focus on these five goals over the next five years. To make progress on all five of our strategic goals, we recognize that we must gather and invest resources to support our work in these areas and we must regularly conduct assessments and evaluations to confirm we are making progress on our goals.

In addition, we recognize that to make progress we will need to ensure that all Division employees have the necessary core competencies to work in these goal areas. We will also need to recognize, reward, and celebrate the contributions of individuals, teams, programs, and units as they make progress toward the achievement of our goals.

Onward!